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Palestine, the World and Resolution 2334

By Robert Fantina
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Well, the *sturm und drang* caused by the passage of United Nations Resolution 2334, condemning Israeli settlements, is like the shot heard ‘round the world. From the apartheid nation of Israel, to the bought-and-paid-for-by-Israeli-lobbies halls of Congress, the cries of ‘foul’ are being heard loudly. It is, indeed, as Macbeth might have said, much ‘sound and fury’, but it would be a mistake to say it signifies nothing. However, what it signifies is not exactly what those shouting the loudest intended.

Let us look first at some of the provisions of the resolution. It demands, without any way of mandating adherence, that Israel “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem”. Further, it states that the establishment of the settlements have “no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law.”

This is nothing new; all settlement activity outside of the U.N. – decreed 1947 borders have always been considered illegal by the international community. The United States has always vetoed similar resolutions. In 2011, then Ambassador Susan Rice, when vetoing one such resolution, said that ‘...we reject in the strongest terms the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity. Continued settlement activity violates Israel’s international commitments, devastates trust between the parties, and threatens the prospects for peace.’ “ She further stated that the U.S. felt that the U.N. was not the place to resolve these differences, but that that should be accomplished through negotiations.

Such negotiations have been ongoing, off and on, for decades, and all that has been accomplished is the further theft of Palestinian land, mass arrests of Palestinian men, women and children, and the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. Once again, allow this writer to state that negotiations can only occur between two parties, each of which has something the other wants, that can only be obtained by surrendering something it has. Palestine wants a nation of its own, with secure borders. But it has nothing that Israel cannot take from it with complete impunity.

So, the U.N. Security Council, with 14 members voting in favor and the U.S. abstaining, passed this resolution. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reduced ties with most of the nations among those 14 with which Israel has diplomatic relations. He has harshly criticized the U.S., although this writer has missed any news about refusing a dime of the \$4 billion the U.S. gives Israel each year. Mr. Netanyahu looks forward to dealing with an ego as big as his own, when Donald Trump, of all people, becomes president of the United States in a few weeks. We’ll all look forward to seeing how that goes.

Senator Lindsay Graham (R- SC), has demanded the defunding of the United Nations, as a result of this vote. He let loose with these pearls of wisdom: “The Obama-Kerry foreign policy has gone from naïve and foolish to flat-out reckless. With friends like these, Israel doesn’t need any enemies. I anticipate this vote will create a backlash in Congress against the United Nations. The

organization is increasingly viewed as anti-Semitic and seems to have lost all sense of proportionality.”

So, in the good senator’s view, endorsing international law and human rights is ‘naïve and foolish and flat-out reckless’. One wonders if his view of the situation might be just a tad distorted by the \$516,715 that pro-Israeli lobbies have donated to his campaigns, \$101,850 of it this year alone.

But he is not alone in his condemnation. Texas Republican Ted Cruz said this: “These acts are shameful. They are designed to secure a legacy, and indeed they have: history will record and the world will fully understand Obama and Kerry as relentless enemies of Israel.” One really has to wonder why the president would pledge \$40 billion dollars to his ‘enemy’ over a ten-year period.

But Mr. Cruz, too, has been the beneficiary of Israel lobby largesse. In 2016, this amounted to a whopping \$309,281. Is it any wonder he is in an uproar about criticism of this golden goose?

It’s not just Republicans who are in such dismay. New York Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer ‘tweeted’ this, following the vote: “Extremely frustrating, disappointing & confounding that the Administration has failed to veto the UN resolution.” Mr. Schumer’s 2016 take from Israeli lobbies was \$386,901. His career total is \$1,179,800. So it is not surprising that he is ‘frustrated, disappointed and confounded’.

Former United Nations ambassador John Bolton was equally disquieted. In an article in the Wall Street Journal, he described Palestine as an “...imaginary state with zero economic viability.” He seems not to recognize that the reason Palestine has ‘zero economic viability’ is partly the result of the Israeli occupation that this resolution condemned. The other part of Palestine’s economic problems is the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

He also said that passage of Resolution 2334 is “... a hunting license to ostracize Israel from the international economic system, exposing it and its citizens to incalculable personal and financial

risk”. Well, when the United Nations condemns the actions of any nation, it is certainly a reasonable step for other nations to ostracize that nation from the international economic system. And does he not consider the ‘incalculable personal and financial risks’ to which Palestinians are exposed on a daily basis, and have been for decades?

Mr. Netanyahu and his bestie, Mr. Trump, proclaim that a new era in Israel-US relations will begin on January 21. Yet ‘undoing’ a U.N. resolution is next to impossible, and based on the fact that 14 members of the Security Council voted in favor of Resolution 2334, there does not seem to be much appetite to even try.

The Israeli Prime Murderer is all in an uproar, accusing the U.S. of colluding with Palestine to pass the resolution. Oh, that the U.S. would collude with Palestine to accomplish anything positive for that beleaguered nation! Yet he himself pressured Egypt, which was originally scheduled to introduce the legislation, successfully preventing it from doing so. Apparently, collusion is fine if Israel does it.

So what does it all signify? Nations around the world can now take steps against Israel. There can be national economic boycotts, and the various laws passed in the U.S. and some European countries banning the BDS (Boycott, Divest and Sanction) movement, now have no legal leg to stand on, if they ever did. Talk of the illegality of settlements can be included in any negotiations on any topic that other nations have with Israel. Agreements about weapons sales, academic exchanges, business partnerships, etc., all can tie in restrictions, due to Israeli’s illegal settlement activities.

So let the U.S. Congress defund the United Nations. Ignore Mr. Netanyahu’s tantrums against nations that endorse human rights and international law. This resolution is, of course, only a step in the long march towards the freedom of the Palestinian people, but it is a significant and necessary one. Other nations must now act; history is on the side of justice, and justice will prevail.

